Chapter 6

Plan Evaluation and Update

Introduction

The ten-year timetable described in the previous chapter is a blueprint for preserving, restoring, and developing land for the open space plan goals. This chapter deal s with a different timetable: that of evaluating, refining, and updating the open space plan to keep it current with implementation goals and changing conditions within the watershed.

To do this, the planning committee must agree who is responsible for updating the open space plan, and adopt a regular plan review schedule.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities extend beyond the acquisition and management of land. Parties involved in the open space plan also have responsibilities in one or more of the following areas:

— Data collection (Lake/Cook County GIS, LCSMC, FOCR, etc.)

— Data analysis (planning committee staff, when in place)

— Data incorporation to refine open space plan (planning committee)

— Implementation of refined plan (drainage districts, FPDs, etc.)

Timing is key, as each group must communicate information needs and findings to the others, and coordinate with Cook and Lake County information updates such as new aerial photographs and local reassessments and parcel maps.

The planning committee is currently made up of members representing both counties and many municipalities, agencies, and private groups. All these parties have been instrumental in assembling and directing the plan. Refinement and updating of the plan will involve many others as well.

Plan Implementation

The consultant team proposes a rotating approach to plan implementation, using as the planning unit the three subwatersheds of the North Branch (*Table 6.1*). Each subwatershed would go through a three-year process. The consultant team believes that a five- or seven-year management cycle would be too lengthy given projected population and land use trends and the rapid action required to attain plan objectives.

Table 6.1: Subwatershed Management Cycle

Subwatershed Management Cycle												
Subwatershed	**1st Management Cycle**			**2nd Management Cycle**			**3rd Management Cycle**			**4th Management Cycle**		
	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**	**Year 6**	**Year 7**	**Year 8**	**Year 9**	**Year 10**	**Year 11**	**Year 12**
Skokie River				1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Middle Fork					1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2
West Fork						1	2	3	1	2	3	1

The management cycle would be broken into the following three general phases:

— Year 1: Data collection and organization

— Year 2: Data assessment and prioritization

— Year 3: Plan redevelopment/refinement and implementation

The planning committee would start the review process on one subwatershed a year (*Diagram 6.1*). This would create an overlapping effect: a deferred schedule that offers the opportunity for agencies and stakeholders to:

— assess the results of implementation activities

— focus efforts

— adapt to rapidly-changing land use conditions

— learn from revision efforts while in process and apply these to the other two cycles

— plan new partnerships as these revisions suggest new approaches

— participate in all stages of revisions to the planning and implementation process in each subwatershed

Because the three-year cycle repeats itself, the subwatershed cycling strategy establishes a natural evaluation framework. Furthermore, the rotating schedule recognizes that each subwatershed is different and will face its own challenges as the plan unfolds. Thus what is learned from work on one subwatershed can be examined for its applicability to the other two at different stages of the review/revision process.

Specific examples of some sample tasks in the management cycle include:

STEP 4: Develop Information Collection Plan:

— **Develop a strategic resource-based monitoring program** to provide timely feedback on how animal and insect species and the stream system are responding to open space management practices.

STEPS 5 & 6: Compile, Analyze, and Evaluate Information:

— **Develop high-resolution land cover maps** and use them to refine open space inventory, measure impervious cover, and monitor changing land cover conditions.

— **Work with the Bird Conservation Network, Chicago Ornithological Society, and Illinois Audubon** to identify existing and potential important bird habitat and determine management strategies.

— **Work with Chicago Wilderness Habitat Project** to compile monitoring data and use this data to refine and evaluate open space management plans.

STEP 12: Implementation of open space plan:

— **Openlands Project:** Encourage participation in its Corporatelands Program, using Abbott Laboratories as an early success.

— **Lake/Cook County Assessor's Office:** Make high-priority parcel information accessible for municipal planning and design updates by incorporating it into permit screening programs in Lake and Cook Counties (already in place for some Lake County parcels.).

Lastly, all revisions would be subject to the same rules of adoption as the original plan, again coordinating all efforts with the Watershed Plan and the Cook County plan when it becomes available.

Diagram 6.1: Open Space Plan Management Cycle